

Stimson Cooling Pond PCB Cleanup Project – Bonner, MT

DEQ Update

February 2012

Project Background

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Department of Justice-Natural Resource Damage Program (NRD), and Stimson Lumber Company (Stimson) reached agreement on an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) and settlement of Montana v. Stimson under which Stimson would remove the cooling pond and berm area that was contaminated with Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) which encroached into the Blackfoot River adjacent to Stimson's Bonner Mill. The AOC and Work Plan were finalized on April 19, 2010, and the documents provided details on how the PCB cleanup work would be conducted. A Design Proposal supplementing the Work Plan was approved by DEQ in August 2010. Stimson Lumber retained a local contractor, Envirocon, Inc., to conduct the cleanup work of properly disposing of the PCB-contaminated materials and reclaiming the river embankment slope (see previous DEQ Project Updates of May 2011, September 2010, and September 2008 for more details. These updates can be found on the DEQ website at: <http://deq.mt.gov/otherpublicdocs/default.mcp.x>.

The Remedial Action – September 2010 to December 2011

The Remedial Action (RA) Phase I construction to remove the cooling pond and berm began in September 2010 and ended in May 2011. Phase I included the removal of the PCBs materials as identified during investigations completed in March 2010. All of the contaminated materials were removed from the Blackfoot River corridor during the RA Phase I construction and the riverbank was reclaimed and re-vegetated. During Phase I additional materials were excavated and stockpiled on site. Before these materials could be used as backfill in the removal areas they were tested. The sampling indicated that those materials also contained low level PCBs, below 10.0 parts per million (ppm) (see previous DEQ Project Update of October 2011 for more details).

In October 2011, DEQ amended the October 2009 Action Memo allowing Stimson to expand an on-site repository for the additional low-level contaminated material stockpiled during Phase I. In October DEQ also approved a work plan for what is now referred to as the RA Phase II construction activities. In November 2011, DEQ and NRD also approved a rock-in-river removal work plan.

Stimson, again working with Envirocon began the RA Phase II construction in late October and substantially completed the work of expanding the on-site repository and removing additional rock and cribbing from the river on December 23, 2011. About 8,500 cubic yards of material was removed from the river.

The on-site repository, containing approximately 40,000 cubic yards of low-level PCB-contaminated material, is now capped with two feet of clean material and hydro-seeded. Monitoring wells (MW-19, MW-20 and MW-21) and part of the fencing were installed and the remaining fencing will be completed in the spring when the weather improves. The repository monitoring wells have been sampled and the groundwater is clean. DEQ, working with Stimson, is now in the process of approving a Bonner Mill PCB Repository Operation, Maintenance, and Monitoring Plan which should be finalized in April. Stimson is also preparing a draft RA Construction Completion Report for DEQ review, as required in the AOC, for the construction completed to date (RA Phase I & II – September 2010 to December 2011).

New Project Details since December 2011

In the fall of 2011, after the removal of the original PCB contamination was completed in the former cooling pond, fire pond lagoon and stud mill areas, the site was backfilled and the grass allowed to grow; DEQ required Stimson to install some additional monitoring wells in those areas to replace the wells that were removed during Phase I construction. DEQ also required some additional soil borings to be completed to test areas that appeared to have some hydrocarbon (oil-based products) contamination in the former east log processing area located immediately to the east of the stud mill area.

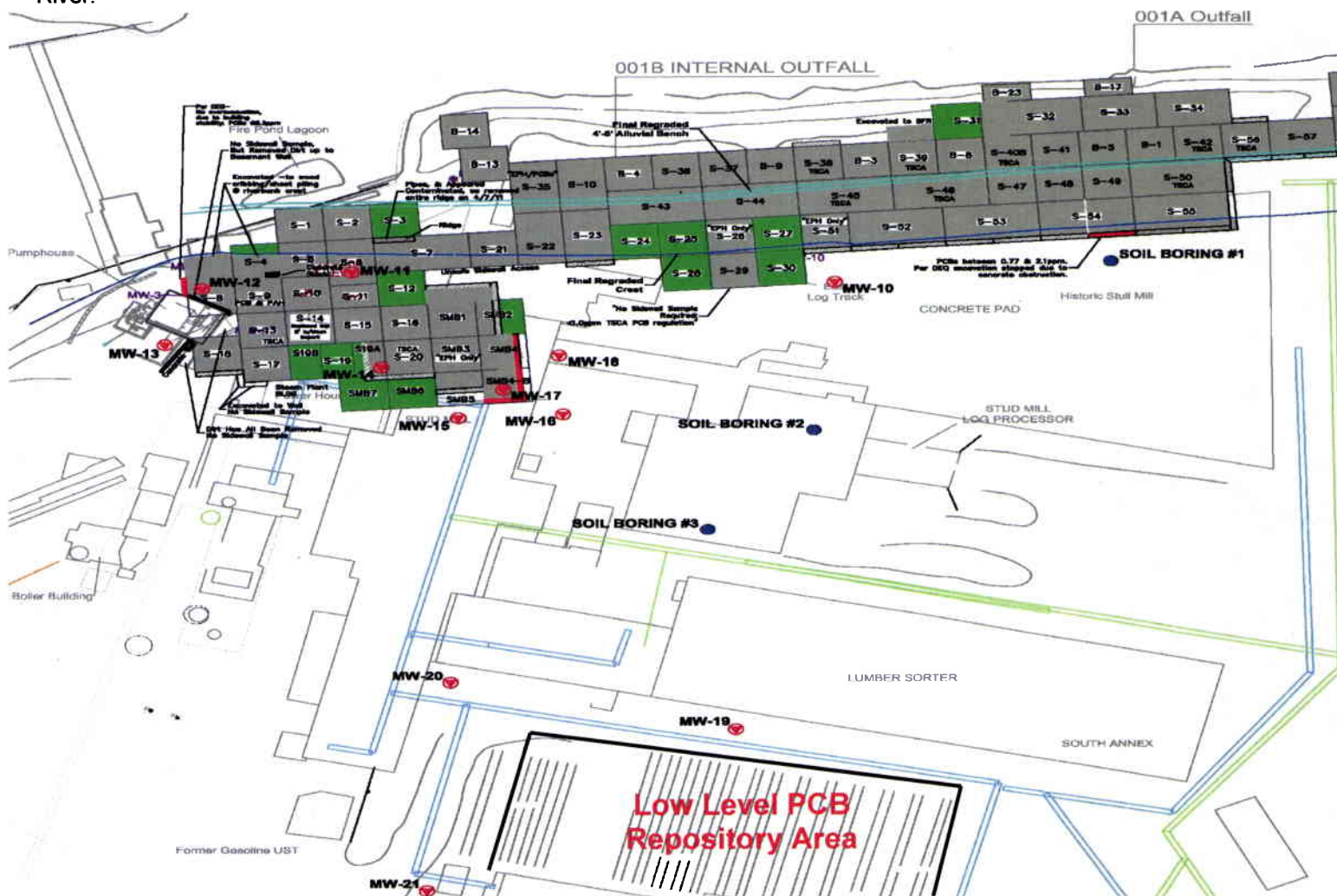


Bonner Mill, Oct. 2011, photo courtesy of Gary Matson



Nine wells and three soil borings were installed. Low level PCBs, below 0.74 ppm, were detected in the soils of two of the new wells (MW-16 and MW-18) in the east log processing area outside the original excavation limit (removal area). Highly-concentrated PCBs were also detected in soils in the new well MW-13 when it was being installed. MW-13 is located about 50 feet west of the original removal area and the PCB concentration was above 6,000 ppm in these soils. Additionally, one of the new wells (MW-11) installed inside the original removal area had free product (oil) in the groundwater the first time it was sampled. The oil or free product sample was sent to the laboratory and it contained PCBs at 1.9 ppm. Three soil borings were also sampled last fall with one boring (SB-3) containing PCB concentrations between 0.74 and 8.0 ppm and the other two borings below the action level. The new wells and soil borings are located up on the bench area above the top of the river bank and to the south, and are 50 to 200 feet from the Blackfoot River.

In January 2012, Stimson submitted a MW-13 Area Additional Soil Boring Sampling Plan for DEQ review. DEQ, after consultation with EPA, approved the plan and 11 additional soil borings were completed and sampled in the MW-13 area. The sampling activities began on February 9, 2012 and were completed on the 12th. The results from this new sampling exercise should be available in March. At this time, the additional PCBs found on-site do not appear to be threatening the surface waters of the Blackfoot River. However, DEQ and Stimson will continue to work together the next few months to collect more information and data to understand the free product (oil) source found in MW-11 and formulate plans for MW-11, the east log processing area (MW-16, MW-18 and SB-3), and the MW-13 area to the west. This new work is now being referred to as RA Phase III. DEQ will continue working with Missoula Co. and the public to provide information as Phase III develops.



For more information please contact Keith Large at DEQ (406) 841-5039 or Doug Martin at the DOJ-Natural Resource Damage Program (406) 444-0234. Or on the web at: www.deq.mt.gov.